

# Avoiding the Slow Burn...

## Are you a candidate for professional burnout?

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As a Missouri state government supervisor or manager, you are likely being asked to “do more with less” everyday. As you accept the challenge to lead your team through possible downsizing and a reduction of resources, it is likely that your own workload will increase as much – if not more – than the workloads of the employees you supervise. Many supervisors may discover, if they have not already, that they must now juggle their managerial responsibilities while doing the same work assigned to their employees just to keep the team’s head above water. Unfortunately, left unchecked, these circumstances have the potential of becoming a breeding ground for supervisor burnout.

Before you get a little too “crispy,” think about your behavior during the last few months as you answer the questions in the following quiz. Although some of the questions may seem to have no direct bearing on your job, remember that burnout may *begin* with you feeling less motivated to do a good job.

### “The Burnout Quiz”

Assign your answer a number from 1 – 5. One means little or no change; five means a lot.

- \_\_\_ 1. Do you tire more easily? Feel fatigued instead of energetic?
- \_\_\_ 2. Are people annoying you by telling you, “You don’t look so good lately”?
- \_\_\_ 3. Does it seem as though you are working harder and harder and accomplishing less and less?
- \_\_\_ 4. Are you increasingly cynical and disenchanted with “the way things are done around here?”
- \_\_\_ 5. Are you often overcome by a sense of gloom you can’t explain?
- \_\_\_ 6. Are you forgetting appointments, missing deadlines, or misplacing personal possessions?
- \_\_\_ 7. Are you increasingly irritable, short-tempered and disappointed with the people around you?
- \_\_\_ 8. Are you choosing to see close friends and relatives less often?
- \_\_\_ 9. Are you too busy to do even routine things like make phone calls, read reports, or do the simplest of household chores?
- \_\_\_ 10. Are you suffering more readily from physical complaints, such as aches, pains, headaches, etc.?
- \_\_\_ 11. Do you feel lost when the day’s activity comes to an end?
- \_\_\_ 12. Do “good days” at work seem few and far between?
- \_\_\_ 13. Are you unable to laugh at yourself?
- \_\_\_ 14. Does planning a weekend activity or a “night on the town” seem like more trouble than it’s worth?
- \_\_\_ 15. Do you have very little to say to people – at work or home?

Source: Excerpted and adapted from *Secrets of Executive Success*, by Mark Golin, Mark Bricklin, David Diamond and the Rodale Center for Executive Development

## Here’s some SPF (Self-Preservation Factors) you can use to protect yourself against the “burn”

Regardless of you score on the “Burnout Quiz,” if the cause of a potential job burnout might be a feeling of helplessness, or being overwhelmed by work demands, the solution may be to follow some of the following strategies that can help you get the most out of life while continuing to be effective on the job. The good news is that each of these strategies works in your favor – even if you’re not exhibiting any signs of burnout.

**SPF1: Be your biggest fan.** Since most everyone is raised to be managed and coached by other people (parents, teachers, etc.), one of the biggest causes of burnout is a lack of feedback from people whose opinion matters to us. You may be doing a great job, but you would never know it from the amount of feedback you get from your boss. If you find yourself in this situation, give yourself a personal “pep talk” consisting of positive feedback, especially when you know you’re getting the job done. And while you’re at it, give yourself a little reward too. This doesn’t mean going crazy and treating yourself to a new car every month. It’s about moderation and a simple sign to yourself that what you’re doing is just fine.

**SPF2: Control what’s best in you.** In many cases, burnout happens when someone gets fixated on only the results and not on the effort. You may have done an outstanding job, but for one reason or another, something just didn’t work out. You may feel helpless in the face of such a setback when in reality, you should feel good about the fine job you did and the effort you put into the project. Maybe you can’t control everything – but you can at least control what’s best in you.

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### The Burnout Quiz: Rating Your Results

*If your score is:*

- 15 – 25:** You’re doing fine.
- 26 – 35:** There are things you should be watching.
- 36 – 50:** You’re fast becoming a candidate for burnout.
- 51 – 65:** You may already be suffering from some job burnout.
- Over 65:** Elvis has left the building!